

T H E
L O U N G E R.

[N° LXXXIII.]

Saturday, Sept. 2. 1786.

Continuation of the Story of Father *Nicholas*.

I N this state of peaceful felicity we had lived something more than a year, when my Emilia found herself with child. On that occasion my anxiety was such as a husband who dotes upon his wife may be supposed to feel. In consequence of that anxiety, I proposed our removing for some weeks to *Paris*, where she might have abler assistance than our province could afford in those moments of danger which she soon expected. To this she objected with earnestness, from a variety of motives; but most of my neighbours applauded my resolution; and one, who was the nephew of a farmer-general, and had purchased the estate on which his father had been a tenant, told me, the danger from their country *accoucheurs* was such, that no body who could afford to go to Paris would think of trusting them. I was a little tender on the reproach of poverty, and absolutely determined for the journey. To induce my wife's consent, I had another pretext, being left executor to a friend who had died in Paris, and had effects remaining there. Emilia at last consented, and we removed to town accordingly.

For some time I scarce ever left our Hotel: It was the same at which Emilia and her father had lodged when he came to Paris to die, and leave her to my love. The recollection of those scenes, tender and interesting as they were, spread a sort of melancholy indulgence over our mutual society, by which the company of any third person could scarcely be brooked. My wife had some of those sad presages which women of her sensibility often feel in the condition she was then in. All my attention and solicitude were excited to combat her fears. "I shall not live," she would say, "to revisit *Santonges*: but my Henry will think of me there; " In those woods in which we have so often walked, by that

“brook to the fall of which we have listened together, and felt
“in silence what language, at least what mine, my Love, could
“not speak.”—The good Father was overpowered by the tenderness of the images that rushed upon his mind, and tears for a moment choked his utterance. After a short space he began, with a voice faltering and weak.

“Pardon the emotion that stopped my recital. You pity me; but it is not always that my tears are of so gentle a kind; the images her speech recalled softened my feelings into sorrow; but I am not worthy of them.—Hear the confession of my remorse.

The anxiety of my Emilia was at last dissipated by her safe delivery of a boy; and on this object of a new kind of tenderness, we gazed with inexpressible delight. Emilia suckled the infant herself, as well from the idea of duty and of pleasure in tending it, as from the difficulty of finding in Paris a nurse to be trusted. We proposed returning to the country as soon as the re-establishment of her strength would permit: Mean-time, during her hours of rest, I generally went out to finish the business which the trust of my deceased friend had devolved upon me.

In passing through the *Thuilleries*, in one of those walks, I met my old companion *Delaferre*. He embraced me with a degree of warmth which I scarce expected from my knowledge of his disposition, or the length of time for which our correspondence had been broke off. He had heard, he said, accidentally of my being in town, but had sought me for several days in vain. In truth, he was of all men one whom I was the most afraid of meeting. I had heard in the country of his unbounded dissipation and extravagance; and there were some stories to his prejudice which were only not believed, from an unwillingness to believe them in people whom the corruptions of the world had not familiarised to baseness; yet I found he still possessed a kind of superiority over my mind, which I was glad to excuse, by forcing myself to think him less unworthy than he was reported. After a variety of inquiries, and expressing his cordial satisfaction at the present happiness I enjoyed, he pressed me to spend that evening with him so earnestly, that though I had made it a sort of rule to be at home, I was ashamed to offer an apology, and agreed to meet him at the hour he appointed.

Our company consisted only of Delaferre himself, and two other officers, one a good deal older than any of us, who had the cross of St Louis, and the rank of Colonel, whom I thought the most agreeable man I had ever met with. The unwillingness with
which

which I had left home, and the expectation of a very different sort of party where I was going, made me feel the present one doubly pleasant. My spirits, which were rather low when I went in, from that constraint I was prepared for, rose in proportion to the pleasantries around me, and the perfect ease in which I found myself with this old officer, who had information, wit, sentiment, every thing I valued most, and every thing I least expected in a society selected by *Delaferre*. It was late before we parted; and at parting I received, not without pleasure, an invitation from the Colonel to sup with him the evening after.

The company at his house I found enlivened by his sister and a friend of hers, a widow, who, though not a perfect beauty, had a countenance that impressed one much more in her favour than mere beauty could. When silent, there was a certain softness in it infinitely bewitching; and when it was lightened up by the expression which her conversation gave, it was equally attractive. We happened to be placed next each other. Unused as I was to the little gallantries of fashionable life, I rather wished than hoped to make myself agreeable to her. She seemed, however, interested in my attentions and conversation, and in hers I found myself flattered at the same time and delighted. We played, against the inclination of this Lady and me, and we won rather more than I wished. Had I been as rich as *Delaferre*, I should have objected to the deepness of the stakes: but we were the only persons of the company that seemed uneasy at our success, and we parted with the most cordial good humour. *Madame de Trenville*, (that was the widow's name), smiling to the Colonel, ask'd him to take his revenge at her house, and said, with an air of equal modesty and frankness, that as I had been the partner of her success, she hoped for the honour of my company, to take the chance of sharing a less favourable fortune.

At first my wife had expressed her satisfaction at my finding amusement in society, to relieve the duty of attending her. But when my absence grew very frequent, as indeed I was almost every day at *Madame de Trenville's*, though her words continued the same, she could not help expressing by her countenance her dissatisfaction at my absence. I perceived this at first with tenderness only, and next evening excused myself from keeping my engagement. But I found my wife's company not what it used to be: thoughtful, but afraid to trust one another with our thoughts, *Emilia* shewed her uneasiness in her looks, and I covered mine but ill with an assumed gaiety of appearance.

The day following *Delaferre* called, and saw *Emilia* for the first

first time. He rallied me gently for breaking my last night's appointment, and told me of another which he had made for me, which my wife insisted on my keeping. Her cousin applauded her conduct, and joked on the good government of wives. Before I went out in the evening I came to with Emilia good night. I thought I perceived a tear on her cheek, and would have staid but for the shame of not going. The company perceived my want of gaiety, and Delasferre was merry on the occasion. Even my friend the Colonel threw in a little raillery on the subject of marriage. 'Twas the first time I felt somewhat awkward at being the only married man of the party.

We played deeper and sat later than formerly; but I was to shew myself not afraid of my wife, and objected to neither. I lost considerably, and returned home mortified and chagrined. I saw Emilia next morning, whose spirits were not high. Methought her looks reproached my conduct, and I was enough in the wrong to be angry that they did so. Delasferre came to take me to his house to dinner. He observed as we went, that Emilia looked ill. "Going to the country will re-establish her," said I. "Do you leave Paris?" said he. — "In a few days." — "Had I such motives for remaining in it as you have." — "What motives?" — "The attachment of such friends; but friendship is a cold word: the attachment of such a woman as *de Trenville*." I know not how I looked, but he pressed the subject no farther; perhaps I was less offended than I ought to have been.

We went to that Lady's house after dinner. She was dressed most elegantly, and looked more beautiful than ever I had seen her. The party was more numerous than usual, and there was more vivacity in it. The conversation turned upon my intention of leaving Paris; the ridicule of country manners, of country opinions, of the insipidity of country enjoyments, was kept up with infinite spirit by Delasferre, and most of the younger members of the company. Madame de Trenville did not join in their mirth, and sometimes looked at me as if the subject was too serious for her to be merry on. I was half ashamed and half sorry that I was going to the country; less uneasy than vain at the preference that was shewn me.

[To be concluded in the next Number.]

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